

# Information Sheet

## Working with Sharps

### Why is working with sharps hazardous?

Injuries caused by sharps (e.g. syringe needles, scalpels, but also broken glassware) are a potential source of contamination with chemical, biological, infectious or radioactive material. As the contaminants directly enter the victim's bloodstream, such injuries are particularly hazardous. Needle-stick injuries often occur when recapping needles or are caused by inappropriate disposal.

### How can I minimize the risk of injuries?

- If possible, replace glass pipettes by plastic pipettes, or use blunt cannulas instead of spiky ones.
- Never leave sharp objects unprotected on work surfaces.
- Dispose of the sharps immediately after use. Only use a properly labeled, special sharps container (unbreakable, puncture-proof, sealable).
- Place the sharps container within easy reach of the point of generation. Don't walk around in the lab when carrying sharps.
- Don't overfill the sharps container (as it will not be possible to seal it in this case). Seal it when it is  $\frac{3}{4}$  full and take it to the hazardous waste disposal station.
- Never place sharp containers in the ordinary trash bin.
- Never bend or shear syringe needles.
- Never recap syringe needles (risk of punctation); immediately dispose of the syringe and the needle.
- Sharps which have been contaminated with infectious material have to be inactivated before disposal (e.g. autoclaving).
- Don't use splintered glassware. Get it expertly repaired or dispose of it.
- Never pick up glass splinters or broken glassware with bare hands. Use a broom, tweezers, dustpan and brush, etc.

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